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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR OPENS THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE'S STATE-OF-THE ART SPECIAL FORCES COMPOUND AT TOKMOK

Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Ambassador participated in a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Kyrgyz Ministry of Defense's "Scorpion" Special Forces Brigade Compound at Tokmok. The \$9 million project was funded through U.S. CENTCOM and the Embassy's Office of Military Cooperation. Chief of the General Staff/First Deputy Minister of Defense General-Major Askarbek Japarov and First Deputy Minister of Defense Colonel Marat Kenjisariev hosted the Ambassador, DATT and OMC Chief for a lunch afterwards, and expounded on their threat perceptions of the region. END SUMMARY.

The Gold Standard in Facilities and Equipment

¶2. (SBU) The Ambassador participated in a ribbon cutting ceremony on October 23 for the opening of the MoD's Scorpion Special Forces Brigade Compound at Tokmok. The compound, which consists of 12 buildings, landscaping and accompanying infrastructure, is truly the gold standard in Central Asian construction and far exceeds any other facility the Kyrgyz currently have. The Ambassador's remarks were followed by Japarov's lengthy praise for U.S. programs. Remarks by both received wide coverage in local television, print and radio media.

¶3. (SBU) Japarov and Kenjasariev first showed the Ambassador a sampling of the 45 new vehicles (35 medium tactical trucks and 10 ambulances), which we have provided to MOD over the last two months. Both Kenjasariev and Japarov bragged that they themselves had test driven the vehicles with Kenjasariev adding that the trucks' steering was smoother than a Mercedes. No fewer than 30 journalists were in tow, snapping pictures of the Ambassador sitting in brand new International Harvester 5-ton utility trucks and ambulances. The two top MoD leaders then led the Ambassador and the media entourage on an hour-long walking tour of the new facilities, which included officer and enlisted housing, classroom training facilities, a multipurpose facility, a dining facility and shower/sauna complex.

Threat Perceptions: The Usual Suspects

¶4. (C) Following the ceremony, Japarov and Kenjisariyev hosted the Ambassador, DATT and OMC Chief for lunch. Both Japarov and Kenjisariev shared their concern about increased activities by violent extremist organizations in northern Afghanistan, which they claimed specifically target the Northern Distribution Network. Kenjisariev and Japarov also aired concerns about the influence of illegal drugs in Central Asia. Highlighting the usual Eurasian narcotics bogeyman, they said that Tajik couriers were crossing the southern border into Kyrgyzstan and together with their

Kyrgyz contacts, were distributing free drugs to poor people in southern Kyrgyz villages in an attempt to entice locals into courier service. Perhaps drawing a conclusion about his forces' ineptitude against these threats, Japarov spoke at length about the MoD's intention to transition the MoD to an all volunteer, professional force. Noting the current, short one-year conscription period, Japarov said that he considered it a crime to send unprepared, young soldiers into harm's way - an act their parents would never forgive.

¶ 15. (C) Kenjisariev added that the public airing of news events of the opening ceremony of the Besh Kungei military hospital on 14 October made an important contribution to Kyrgyz goodwill toward America. He also noted that members of the Bakiyev government have already been demanding medical treatment at the facility.

¶ 16. (C) Comment: Since this event, Japarov has been named as the new Commander of the Border Service. This is fortunate as we have developed a good working relationship with him and the Border Service is one of the most important security institutions in Kyrgyzstan from the perspective of USG interests here.

GFOELLER